

# COLUMBIAN HISTORIAN.

*"Enlightened minds and virtuous manners lead to the gates of glory."*

VOL. I.

NEW RICHMOND, JULY 23, 1824.

NO. 6.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY A. C., J. & W. HERRON, AT \$1 50  
CTS. PER ANNUM, PAYABLE HALF-YEARLY IN ADVANCE.

tion, and depend upon principles instilled into them from their infancy.

On all other occasions they are humane and compassionate. Nothing can exceed the warmth of their affection towards their friends, who consist of all those who live in the same village, or are in alliance with them: among these all things are common; their most valuable articles are not withheld from a friend; has any one of these had ill success in hunting, his harvest failed, or his house burned, he feels no other effect of his misfortune, than it gives him an opportunity to experience the benevolence and regard of his associates. On the other hand the Indian, to the enemy of his country or his tribe, or to those who have privately offended him, is implacable. He conceals his sentiments; he appears reconciled, until, by some treachery or surprise, he has an opportunity of executing a horrible revenge. No length of time is sufficient to allay his resentment; no distance of place great enough to protect the object; he crosses the steepest mountains, he pierces the most impenetrable forests, and traverses the most dismal swamps and deserts, for several hundreds of miles, bearing the inclemency of the season, the fatigue of the expedition, the extremes of hunger and thirst, with patience and cheerfulness, in hopes of surprising his enemy, on whom he ex-

ercises the most shocking barbarities, even to the eating of his flesh. To such extremes do the Indians extend their friendship and their enmity; and such indeed is the character of all strong uncultivated minds.

The treatment of their dead shews, in glowing colours, the strength of their friendship, and warm attachment, to their departed friends. When any one of the society is cut off, he is lamented by the whole; on this occasion a variety of ceremonies are performed. The body is washed, anointed and painted. Then the women lament the loss with hideous howlings, intermixed with songs, which celebrate the great actions of the deceased and his ancestors. The men mourn also, though in a less extravagant manner. The whole village is present at the interment, and the corps is habited in their most sumptuous ornaments. Close to the body of the deceased are placed his bow and arrows, and other weapons of war, with whatever he valued most in his lifetime, and a quantity of provisions for his subsistence on the journey which he is supposed to take. The solemnity, like every other, is attended with feasting. The funeral being ended, the relations of the deceased confine themselves to their huts, for a considerable time, to indulge their grief. After an interval of some weeks, they visit the grave and repeat their sorrow, now



clothe the remains of the body, and act over again all the solemnities of the funeral.

The most remarkable funeral ceremony is what they call the feast of the dead, or the feast of souls. The day for this ceremony is appointed in the assembly of their chiefs, who give the necessary orders for every thing that may conduce to the pomp and magnificence of its celebration; and the neighboring nations are invited to partake of the entertainment. At this time, all who have died since the preceding feast of the kind, are taken out of their graves: even those who have been interred at the greatest distance from the villages, are diligently looked for, and conducted to this general rendezvous of the dead, which exhibits a scene of horror beyond the power of description. When the feast is concluded, the bodies are drest in the finest skins which can be procured, and after being exposed for some time in this pomp, are again committed to the earth, with great solemnity which is succeeded by funeral games.

Their taste for war, the most striking characteristic of an Indian, gives a strong bias to their religion. The god of war, whom they call Areskoui, is revered as the great god of their people. Him they invoke before they go into the field. Some nations worship the sun and moon, as symbols of the power of the great spirit. There are among them traditions of the creation of the world, of Noah's flood, &c. Like all rude nations they are strongly addicted to superstition. They believe in the existence of a number of good and bad genii, or spirits, who interfere in the affairs of mortals, and produce all our hap-

piness or misery. It is from the evil genii, in particular, they imagine all our diseases proceed: and it is to the good genii to whom we are indebted for a cure. Their priests or jugglers are supposed to be inspired by the good genii in their dreams, with the knowledge of future events; they are called in to the assistance of the sick, and are supposed to know the event, and in what way they must be treated. But these spirits appear to be extremely simple in their system of physic; in almost every disease they prescribe the same remedy. The patient is inclosed in a narrow cabin, in the midst of which a large stone is made red hot; on this they throw water, the steam produces a profuse sweat, they then hurry him from this hot bath, and plunge him instantly into the adjacent creek or river. This method, although it costs many their lives, often performs many remarkable cures.

They are known however, to have considerable knowledge in the vegetable kingdom, and the white inhabitants are indebted to them for the knowledge of many powerful plants as restoratives, and antidotes to the poison of reptiles, with which the woods in many parts of America abound.

Although the Indian women generally bear the laborious part of domestic economy, their condition, at least among the tribes of North America, is far from being so wretched, so slavish and depressed, as has been represented by Dr. Robertson and other writers. "Their employment, (says Dr. Barton,) is chiefly in their houses, except when they are raising their crops of maize, or Indian corn, at which times they generally turn out to assist their



husbands and parents, but they are not compelled to do this." "You may depend on my assertion (says the same gentleman, who had ample opportunities of being informed of the customs and manners of the Indians) that there are no people any where who love their women more than these people do, or men of better understanding, in distinguishing the merits of the opposite sex, or men more faithful in rendering suitable compensation. They are courteous and polite to their women, tender, gentle, and fond even to an appearance of effeminacy. An Indian man seldom attempts to use a woman of any description with indelicacy, either of action or language." I wish we could with propriety adopt the same language, when speaking of the young men of the present age who think it a disparagement to be compared with the untutored savage of the wilderness.

In the hunting seasons, that is in autumn and winter, when the men are out in the forest, the whole care of the house or family rests upon the women: at these times they undergo much care and fatigue, such as cutting wood &c. but this labour is in part relieved by the old men whose vigor is so far diminished, as not to be able to sustain the fatigue of hunting, or the toils of martial achievements. But nothing shows the importance and respectability of the women among the Indians, more than that custom many of the tribes are in, of letting their women preside in the councils of their country: to this we may add, that several of the Florida nations have at different times, been governed by the wisdom and the prudence of female caziques.

Liberty, in its fullest extent be-

ing the dearling passion of the Indians, their education is directed in such a manner as to cherish this disposition to the utmost. Hence their children are never chastised with blows, and they are seldom even reprimanded. Reason, they say, will guide their children when they come to the use of it, and before that time their faults cannot be very great. But blows might damp their fierce and martial spirit, by the habit of a slavish motive to action. When grown up, they experience nothing like command, dependance or subordination; even strong persuasion is carefully avoided by those of influence among them. No man is held in great esteem, unless he has increased the strength of his country with a captive or adorned his hut with a scalp of one of his enemies.

Controversies among the Indians are few, and quickly decided. When any criminal matter is so flagrant as to become a national concern, it is brought under the jurisdiction of the great council; but in common cases the parties settle the dispute between themselves. If a murder be committed, the family which has lost a relation prepares to retaliate on that of the offender. They often kill the murderer: and when this happens (which is but seldom) the kindred of the last person slain, look upon themselves as much injured, and to have the same right to vengeance, as the other party.

It is common, however, for the offender to absent himself; the friends send compliments of condolence to those of the person who has been murdered. The head of the family at length appears, with a number of presents, the delivery of which he accompanies



with a formal speech: the whole ends, as usual, in mutual feasting, in songs and dances. If the murder is committed by one of the same family or cabin, that family has the full right of judgment within itself; either to punish the guilty with death, or to pardon him; or to oblige him to give some recompense to the wife and children of the deceased. Instances of this kind are very rare, for their attachment to those of the same family, are so remarkably strong, that it may vie with the most celebrated friendships of fabulous antiquity.

Such, in general, are the customs and manners of the Indians. But almost every tribe has something peculiar to itself. Among the Hurons and the Natchez, the dignity of the chief is said to be hereditary, and the right of succession in the female line. When this happens to be extinct, the most reputable matron of the tribe, we are informed, makes a choice of whom she pleases to succeed.

The Cherokees are governed by several Sachems, or chiefs, elected by the different villages as are also the Creeks and the Chactaws: the two latter punish adultery in a woman by cutting off her hair; which they will not suffer to grow, until corn is ripe the next season; but the Illinois, for the same crime, cut off the nose and ears.

The Indians on the upper lakes are formed into a sort of empire. The emperor is elected from the eldest tribe, which is the Ottawawas; this authority is very considerable. A few years ago, the person who held this rank, formed a design of uniting all the Indian nations under his sovereignty; but this bold attempt

proved unsuccessful.

In general, the Indians of America live to a great age, although it is difficult to obtain from them an exact account of the number of their years. It was asked of one who appeared extremely old, what age he was of. I am above twenty, said he: but upon putting the question in a different manner, and reminding him of former times, and some particular circumstances, my machee, said he, spoke to me, when I was young, of the Incas: and he had seen those princes. According to this reply, there must have elapsed from the date of his machee's, or grandfather's, remembrance to that time 232 years. The Indian who made this reply, appeared to be 120 years of age: for besides the whiteness of hair and beard, his body was almost bent to the ground: without showing any other mark of debility, or suffering. This happened in 1764.

This longevity and state of uninterrupted health, is thought by some to be the consequence in part of their vacancy from all serious thought and employment; joined also with their robust texture, and formation of their bodily organs. Were the Indians to abstain from spiritous liquors, and their destructive wars, of all races of men who inhabit the globe, they would be the most likely to extend the bounds and enjoyments of animal life to their utmost duration.

Before we take our leave of the Indian natives, let us attend to some other accounts which will set their character in a more clear and strong point of view, and rescue it from that degradation and obscurity, in which some Spanish historians have endeavoured



to envelope it.

Their friendships are strong and faithful to the last extremity; of which no further proof need be adduced, than the following anecdote of the late colonel Byrd, of Virginia, who was sent to the Cherokee nation, to transact some business with them. It happened that some of our disorderly people had just killed one or two of that nation. It was therefore proposed in their council, that colonel Byrd should be put to death, in revenge for the loss of their countrymen. Among them was a chief called Silouee, who, on some former occasion, had contracted an acquaintance and friendship with colonel Byrd. He came to him every night in his tent, and told him not to be afraid, for they should not kill him. After many days deliberation, contrary to Silouee's expectations, the determination of the council was, that Byrd should be put to death, and warriors were despatched as executioners. Silouee attended them, and when they entered the tent, he threw himself between them and said to the warriors, "This man is my friend: before you get at him you must kill me." On which they returned, and the council respected the principle so much as to recede from their determination.

Of their bravery and address in war, we have had sufficient proofs; of their eminence in oratory we have fewer examples, because it is chiefly displayed in their own councils. One, however, we have of superior lustre: the speech of Logan, a Mingo chief, to Lord Dunmore, when governor of Virginia, at the close of a war in which the Shawnese, Mingoes, and Delawares were u-

nited. The Indians were defeated by the Virginia militia, and sued for peace. Logan, however, disdained to be among the suppliants but lest the sincerity of a treaty should be distrusted from which so distinguished a chief absented himself, he sent by a messenger, the following speech to Lord Dunmore: "I appeal to any white man to say if he ever entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not. During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate for peace. Such was my love for the whites, that my countrymen, as they passed, pointed and said, 'Logan is the friend of the whitemen.' I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries done by one man. Colonel Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood, and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not even sparing my women and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it; I have killed many; I have fully glutted my vengeance; for my country I rejoice at the beams of peace; but do not harbour a thought that mine is the joy of fear; Logan never knew fear; he will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is left to mourn for Logan? Not one."

Another anecdote in favour of the Indian character, related by Doctor Benjamin Franklin, deserves a place in this history, Conrad Weiser, a celebrated interpreter of Indian languages, who had been naturalized among



the Six Nations, and spoke the Mohock language well, gave Franklin the following account.

He was sent by our governor an a message to the council at Onondago; he called at the habitation of Cannassetago, an old acquaintance, who embraced him, spread furs for him to sit on, placed before him some boiled beans and venison, and mixed some rum and water, for his drink; when he was well refreshed, and had lighted his pipe, Canassetago began to converse with him; asked how he had fared the many years since they had seen each other; whence he came, and what had occasioned his journey, &c. Conrad answered all his questions, and when the discourse began to flag, the Indian, to continue it, said, "Conrad you have lived long among the white people, and know something of their customs: I have been sometimes at Albany, and have observed that once in seven days they shut up their shops, and all assemble in the great house; tell me what it is for, and what it is they do there."

"They meet there," says Conrad, "to hear and learn good things." "I do not doubt," said the Indian, "that they tell you so, for they have told me the same; but I doubt the truth of what they say, and I will tell you my reasons. I went lately to Albany to sell my skins and buy blankets, knives, powder, rum, &c. You know I generally used to deal with Hans Hanson; but I was a little inclined this time to try some other merchants. However, I called first upon Hans, and asked him what he would give for beaver. He said he would

not give more than four shillings a pound, but (says he) I cannot talk on this business now, this is the day we meet together to learn good things; and I am going to the meeting. So I thought to myself, since I cannot do any business to day, I may as well go to the meeting too; and I went with him. There stood up a man in black, and began to talk to the people very angrily. I did not understand what he said; but perceiving he looked much at me & at Hanson, I imagined he was angry at seeing me there; so I went out, set down near the house, struck fire and lit my pipe, waiting till the meeting should break up. I thought too that the man had mentioned something about beaver, and suspected that it might be the subject of their meeting. So when they came out—"Well, Hans," says I, "I hope you have agreed to give me more than four shillings a pound." "No," says he, "I cannot give so much, I cannot give more than three shillings and six pence. I then spoke to several other dealers, but they all sung the same song three and six pence, three and six pence. This made it clear to me, that my suspicion was right; and whatever they pretended meeting to learn good things, the real purpose was to consult how to cheat the Indians in the price of beaver. Consider but a little, Conrad, and you must be of my opinion. If they met so often to learn good things, they certainly would have learned some before this time. But they are still ignorant. You know our practice, if a white man, travelling through our country, en-



"ters one of our cabins, we all  
 "treat him, as I treat you; we  
 "dry him if he is wet, we warm  
 "him if he is cold, and give him  
 "meat and drink, so that he may  
 "satisfy his thirst and hunger; and  
 "we spread soft furs for him to  
 "rest and sleep upon: we demand  
 "nothing in return. But if I go  
 "into a white man's house at Al-  
 "bany, and ask for victuals and  
 "drink, they ask where is your  
 "money? and if I have none, they  
 "say get out you Indian dog!  
 "You see they have not learned  
 "those little good things, that  
 "we need no meetings to be in-  
 "structed in, because our moth-  
 "ers taught them to us when we  
 "were children; and therefore it  
 "is impossible that their meetings  
 "should be as they say, for any  
 "such purpose, or have any such  
 "effect; they are only to contrive  
 "the cheating of Indians in the  
 "price of their beaver."

I appeal to every sensible pro-  
 fessor of Christianity, if there is  
 not more force in the reasoning  
 of this unlettered inhabitant of the  
 wilderness, than in many of the  
 elaborate discourses of the learned  
 divines amongst us, though em-  
 bellished with all the trappings of  
 modern elocution.

I shall close the Indian charac-  
 ter with a short extract with some  
 small variations, from a letter of  
 the justly celebrated Wm. Penn,  
 the founder of Pennsylvania; who  
 in the early part of the settlement  
 of America, had an opportunity  
 of observing their custom and  
 manner of life before they had  
 been changed by so frequent an  
 intercourse with Europeans. He  
 describes their persons, manners,  
 language, religion, and govern-  
 ment, in the following manner:  
 "They are generally tall, straight  
 well built and of singular propor-

tion; they tread strong and clever,  
 and mostly walk with a lofty chin:  
 of complexion, brown as the gyp-  
 sies in England. They grease  
 themselves with bear's fat clarifi-  
 ed; and using no defence against  
 the sun and weather, their skins  
 must needs be swarthy. Their  
 eyes are little and black, not un-  
 like a strait-looking Jew. I have  
 seen as comely Europeanlike fa-  
 ces among them, as on your side  
 the sea. An Italian complexion  
 hath not much more of the white,  
 and the noses of many of them  
 have as much of the Roman.  
 Their language is lofty, yet nar-  
 row: but, like the Hebrew, in  
 signification, full; like short hand  
 in writing, one word serveth in  
 the place of three, and the rest  
 supplied by the understanding of  
 the hearer. Imperfect in their  
 tenses, wanting in their moods,  
 participles, adverbs, conjunctions,  
 and interjections: I have made it  
 my business to understand it, that  
 I might not want an interpreter  
 on any occasion: and I must say  
 that I know not a language spoke  
 in Europe, that hath words of more  
 sweetness or greatness in accent  
 and emphasis than theirs.

Their children, as soon as they  
 are born, are washed in water,  
 and while young they plunge  
 them into rivers, in cold weather,  
 to harden and embolden them.  
 Having wrapt them in a clout,  
 they lay them on a straight thin  
 board, a little more than the  
 length and breadth of the child,  
 and swaddle it fast upon the  
 board, to make it straight, and  
 thus they carry them at their  
 backs. The children will walk  
 when very young, at nine months  
 commonly: they wear only a clout  
 round their waist, till they are  
 grown up: if boys they go a fish-  
 ing till ripe for the woods, which



is about fifteen; they then hunt; and after having given some proofs of their manhood, by a good return of skins, they may marry; otherwise it is a shame to think of a wife. The girls stay with their mothers, and help to hoe the ground, plant corn and carry burdens. When the young women are fit for marriage, they wear something on their heads for advertisement, but so as their faces are hardly to be seen, except when they please.

Their houses are made of poles stuck in the ground, covered with mats and bark, in the fashion of an English barn; their beds are reeds, grass, or skins. If an European comes to see them, or calls for lodging at their house or wigwam, they give him the best place, and first cut. If they come to visit the white inhabitants, their salutation is commonly *Itah!* which is as much as to say, good be to you! and set them down, which is mostly on the ground; sometimes not speaking a word, but observe all that passes. If you give them any thing to eat or drink, it is well, for they will not ask; and, if it be little or much, if it be with kindness, they are well pleased: else they go away sullen, but say nothing. In liberality they excel; nothing is too good for their friend. Light of heart, strong affections, but soon spent: they are the most merry creatures that live; they feast and dance perpetually; they never have much nor do they want much. If they are ignorant of our pleasure, they are free from our pains. We sweat and toil to live; their pleasure feeds them; I mean their hunting, fishing, and fowling; and their table is spread every where: they eat twice a day, morning and even-

ing. In sickness impatient to be cured, and for it give any thing, especially to their children, to whom they are extremely natural.

They are great concealers of their own resentments. A tragical instance fell out since I came into the country:—A king's daughter, thinking herself slighted by her husband, in suffering another woman to lie down between them, rose up, went out, plucked a root out of the ground and ate it; upon which she immediately died: and for which, he, some time after, made an offering to her kindred, for atonement, and liberty of marriage; as two others did to the kindred of their wives, that died a natural death. For, until the widowers have done so, they must not marry again.

They believe in God and immortality, without the help of metaphysics: for they say, "There is a great King that made them, who dwells in a glorious country to the southward of them, and the souls of the good shall go thither, where they shall live again." Their worship consists of two parts, viz. Sacrifice and Cantico. Their sacrifice is the first fruits; the first and fattest buck they kill, they put on the fire, where he is all burned; and he that performs the ceremony sings, at the same time, a mournful ditty, but with such marvellous ferment, and labour of body, that he will even sweat to a foam. The other part is their Cantico, performed by round dances, sometimes words, sometimes songs, then shouts; and two (being the first that begin) by singing and drumming on a board, direct the chorus; their postures in the dance are very antick, and dif-